

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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R 062340Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6344

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T LONDON 15989

EXDIS

E.O.11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINT, IZ

SUBJECT: CURRENT BRITISH ASSESSMENT OF KURDISH WAR IN
IRAQ

REF: BAGHDAD 835 (NOTAL)

1. EMBASSY IS POUCHING COPY OF LT. COL SANDERS' TELEGRAPHIC REPORT (REFTEL) TO DEPARTMENT (NEA/ARP) AND BAGHDAD. LATEST BRITISH ESTIMATE OF KURDISH SITUATION HAS TAKEN ACCOUNT OF ITS CONTENTS. BRITISH AGREE THAT CURRENT IRAQI OFFENSIVE HAS BEEN THE MOST SUCCESSFUL IN HISTORY, HAVING TAKEN SOME 70 PERCENT OF THE TERRITORY OVER WHICH KURDS CLAIMED CONTROL PRIOR TO BEGINNING OF THE DRIVE. THAT IS NOT TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT BRITISH FORESEE TOTAL VICTORY FOR THE IRAQI FORCES.

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2. FACTORING IN A REPORT FROM US CONSUL IN TABRIZ,

AMONG OTHERS, THE BRITISH BELIEVE THAT TOTAL PACIFICATION IS NOT REALISTICALLY ATTAINABLE FOR IRAQIS. THEY THINK THAT IRAQIS WOULD HAVE MADE A DEFINITE GAIN IF THEY COULD FORCE KURDS INTO ACCEPTING A CEASEFIRE ALONG PRESENT LINES, LIMITING KURDS TO LESS ACCESSIBLE MOUNTAINS. (SANDERS' REPORT SAYS IRAQI SENIOR OFFICERS ADMIT THE ONLY SOLUTION IS POLITICAL, AND IRAQI MONEY BEING SPENT FREELY TO FURTHER THAT SOLUTION.)

3. BRITISH ALSO BELIEVE IRANIAN INVOLVEMENT IS CAUSE FOR CONCERN. IRANIANS HAVE HAD A COUPLE OF ARTILLERY BATTALIONS IN IRAQ AND MAY BE FACED WITH THE NEED TO SUPPORT THE KURDS EVEN MORE OVER THE WINTER AND NEXT YEAR. IF THE IRANIANS CHOOSE A GREATER LEVEL OF SUPPORT (RATHER THAN PRESSING THE KURDS TO AGREE TO CEASEFIRE) CHANCES OF DIRECT IRAQI-IRANIAN CLASHES ARE INCREASED.

4. SANDERS' REPORT QUOTES OIL COMPANY EXECUTIVE TO EFFECT THAT THERE WAS SOME DAMAGE TO OIL PIPELINES IN KIRKUK OIL FIELDS EARLIER THIS YEAR BY KURDS, BUT NO SABOTAGE SINCE AUGUST. SECURITY PRECAUTIONS ROUND THE OIL COMPLEXES IS EXTENSIVE.

SPIERS

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